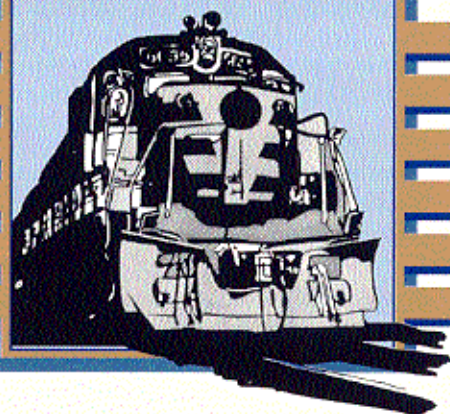


# MICHIGAN RAIL UPDATE



A publication of the Michigan Railroads Association

Spring 2003

## REMOTE CONTROL OF LOCOMOTIVES



### *From the President*

*Robert Chaprnka*

The introduction of remote control of locomotives in rail yards is underway in Michigan and many other states throughout the country. After carefully monitoring the use of this technology for over ten years, the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA), the governmental agency responsible for railroad safety, has approved its use with comprehensive guidelines and training requirements.

At first one might ask, is it safe moving a locomotive with nobody in the cab? Remote control of locomotives in rail yards has been widely used in Canada for more than ten years and has proven to be far safer than conventional technology. Remote control has been credited with sharply reducing the number of rail yard accidents. Canadian National Railway has been using remote control since 1989 and has experienced a reduction in yard accidents by over 60%. The Canadian Pacific Railroad has used remote control since 1994 and reports that yard accidents are one-third what they used to be. CSX's data in the U.S. in 2002 shows a 48.7% reduction in total train accidents where remote control has been introduced.

Why such dramatic improvement in worker injuries using remote control? The main reason is that remote control reduces the possibility of crew and yard worker miscommunication. With conventional technology, employees on the ground direct locomotive operations either through hand signals or radio communications with the locomotive engineer. Under remote control, trained certified on-the-ground operators

*Remote control is an example where technology has improved safety at the workplace while at the same time providing efficiencies within the railroad industry.*

direct the locomotive's operation by sending signals to an onboard computer. The remote control operator can see all aspects of the train and will always control movement from the safest position.

Remote control operators must undergo extensive training in the classroom and in the yard, passing both written and proficiency tests before being certified as remote control operators. The FRA is closely monitoring the use of remote control.

You may be hearing that some communities are expressing safety concerns about the use of remote control. Those concerns are being driven largely by one particular labor organization because it was not designated

to represent the workers using remote control technology. The labor organization that represents remote control workers is convinced that remote control poses no safety risks.

Remote control of locomotives benefits railroad workers with safer working conditions. The public also benefits. Fewer yard accidents mean safer communities.

Remote control of locomotives also benefits railroad companies because it is more efficient. Continued productivity is critical so railroads can continue to offer the safest and lowest cost transportation service possible.

Remote control is an example where technology has improved safety at the workplace while at the same time providing efficiencies within the railroad industry.

### **GOVERNOR NAMES GLORIA JEFF MDOT DIRECTOR**

This past January Governor Jennifer Granholm appointed Gloria J. Jeff as director of the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT). A native of Detroit, she is nationally renowned for her work in the transportation field. Her education in civil engineering and urban planning, along with her vast knowledge of the issues surrounding multi-modal transportation, led to her appointment as

*(Continued on page 4)*

## OPERATION LIFESAVER PROFILES IN SAFETY

# CN'S LINDA WILBER RECOGNIZED FOR EXTRAORDINARY RAIL SAFETY EFFORTS

Special Agent Linda Wilber has been doing what she does best for all of the 25 years she's been with Canadian National Railway (CN): raising awareness of rail safety. As a commissioned police officer for the CN Police in Ferndale, Michigan, Linda has dedicated herself to using education for the prevention of railroad accidents. She has done such an outstanding job that she was recently recognized by Michigan Operation

Lifesaver as their "Presenter of the Year" in 2002.

Michigan Operation Lifesaver is a voluntary, nonprofit partnership of Michigan Department of Transportation, law enforcement officers, and employees of the nation's railroad industry. Their goal is, through public education, to reduce the incidences of crashes, injuries and fatalities at railroad-highway intersections.

Linda's primary job is to patrol CN's rail yards and crossings in Michigan. From Port Huron to Detroit to Toledo, Ohio she can be found in her patrol car checking for vandalism or trespassers and responding to accidents. In addition, she spends a good deal of time taking CN's Operation Lifesaver Program and Grade Crossing & Trespasser initiatives to local area schools and community groups.

"I absolutely love people—especially kids," says Linda, a mother of seven children of her own. "When I tell them that it takes a train moving 55 mph the length of 18 football fields to come to a complete stop, I see the light come on in

their eyes and I know the message has hit home. That's a great feeling."

For Linda, it's important to start educating children from the pre-school years about rail safety and to reinforce the message with high school students *before they get their driver's license*. Kids are often so taken by her message and delivery that they are excited to discuss what they've learned with their families afterwards.

"If I can save one life or get someone to think twice before trying to race a train, my work will have been worth it," Linda adds.

Last year, 29,000 students and over 1,100 teachers heard Linda's informative and passionate presentations. "We received many calls from teachers and citizens alike commending her on a job well done," says Linda's boss, Inspector Bill Willingham of CN's Police Department. "She has an energy and passion for people that makes people sit up and take notice when she speaks."

*The Michigan Railroads Association salutes Special Agent Linda Wilber for her outstanding efforts in promoting railroad safety.*



*Canadian National Special Agent Linda Wilber receiving "Presenter of the Year" award from Operation Lifesaver State Coordinator Al Bard.*

## AL BARD NAMED NEW MICHIGAN OPERATION LIFESAVER COORDINATOR

Allen Bard was named the Michigan Operation Lifesaver new state coordinator this past December. Mr. Bard has been involved in Operation Lifesaver activities since 1994. He spent 27 years working for the Department of State where a major portion of his efforts involved traffic safety initiatives with the Bureau of Driver Improvement. His background at the Department of State ideally suits him to lead Michigan Operation Lifesaver which is dedicated to helping prevent and reduce crashes, injuries and fatalities at Michigan's 6,000 public and private highway/rail grade crossings through education enforcement and engineering. Mr. Bard can be reached by calling 1-800-759-9012 or email at [aeb1277@aol.com](mailto:aeb1277@aol.com).

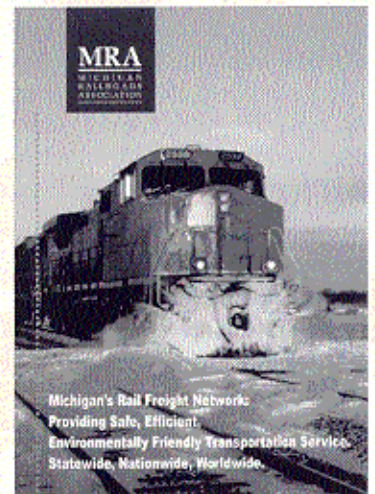
## UPDATED MRA ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT BROCHURE AVAILABLE

Initiated more than nine years ago, the Michigan Railroads Association (MRA) has published the fourth edition of a full-color brochure that opens to a map showing all of Michigan's rail lines and contact individuals for every railroad in Michigan.

With a fresh look and updated information and map, the brochure is available free of charge from the Michigan Railroads Association. MRA President Bob Chaprka believes the piece is an important component in the overall marketing effort of Michigan's railroads.

"This brochure illustrates the all-encompassing nature of Michigan's rail network and how rail transportation can help communities in their development efforts," Chaprka says.

For a free copy of the brochure or more information, call the MRA at (517) 482-9413 or e-mail them at: [mra@michiganrailroadsassociation.com](mailto:mra@michiganrailroadsassociation.com)



# MOVING MICHIGAN

## RAILAMERICA

Huron & Eastern, Saginaw Valley, Mid Michigan, Grand Rapids and Eastern and Michigan Shore Railroads

Operations Center: Vassar, Michigan

General Manager: Larry Ross

Employees in Michigan: 41

Route Miles in Michigan: 325

Major Commodities: Grain, Sugar Products, Auto Parts, Fertilizer, Sand, Newsprint, Scrap Metal



### SHORTLINES PROVIDE SPECIALIZED SERVICES TO SHIPPERS



Larry Ross  
General Manager

RailAmerica (RA) owns and operates five shortline railroads in the State of Michigan which move a combined total of 27,000 carloads per year. The RA

Lines are Huron & Eastern, Saginaw Valley, Mid Michigan, Grand Rapids and Eastern and Michigan Shore Railroads.

Three automotive industry supply plants are located on trackage including Oxford Automotive at Alma, Meridian Automotive at Ionia, and Michigan and Tower Automotive in Elkton, Michigan. Auto Parts are shipped throughout the U.S, Canada and Mexico. Nugent Sand in Michigan is a major supplier of mold sand to the auto industry.

In addition to auto parts, approximately 12,000 carloads of grain and related products are loaded and shipped annually between Mid Michigan, Huron & Eastern and the Saginaw Valley Lines. Major agricultural shippers are Co-Operative Elevators, Michigan Agricultural Commodities, Star of the West Milling, Michigan Sugar, Hemlock Elevators,

Michigan Ethanol, Agri-Sales and King Milling. Many of the shippers have multiple locations. Train crews also shuttle agricultural products to on-line processing plants. The plants also ship numerous carloads of inbound and outbound fertilizer annually.

Michigan Ethanol just recently opened their new / ultra modern facility in Caro, Michigan. Three in-plant tracks can accommodate up to 70 cars, plus a 30 car

*Shortline railroads have the ability to provide flexible and personal service to their customers.*

passing track was constructed just outside of the plant. Crews working out of Vassar serve the plant daily.

Northwest Energy Company has just opened a new transload facility at Breckenridge, Michigan. The plant just recently received its first inbound carloads of propane. A new 10 car spur track was constructed to service the plant.

Frigidaire has a huge manufacturing plant in Greenville, Michigan and Webb Chemical Company operates a major transload facility in Muskegon. Vans Logistics Service operates a transload facility in Grand Rapids. Grand Rapids crews also supply newsprint to the *Grand*

*Rapids Press* and raw materials to the Amway Manufacturing Plant in Ada, Michigan. Crews based in Arthur, Michigan handle inbound newsprint for *Saginaw News* in Saginaw.

Alchem Aluminum Company is located near Saginaw and gets inbound shipments of aluminum ingots that are melted in a large electric furnace with the molten metal transported via special ladle trucks to a nearby GM Plant. The plant produces car and truck engines.

Recycling plants include Alma Iron and Metal in Alma and Flint Recycling at Saginaw.

Rail America's Michigan lines have a diversified commodity base and provide specialized services to their customers. Their Michigan lines have numerous transload and transfer yards available for current non-rail served customers who like to try rail shipments without investing in additional infrastructure.

Shortline railroads have the ability to provide flexible and personal service to their customers. They are important to ensure Michigan's rural areas have access to rail transportation for their development needs.



## INSTITUTE PRESERVES RAILROADING HERITAGE

The Michigan State Trust for Railroad Preservation, Inc. is a non-profit educational organization established in 1980 that provides interactive steam era railroading experiences through its *Steam Railroading Institute* (SRI) programs for several hundred people annually at its Shiawassee County, Michigan site. In addition, visitors are introduced to the fully restored Pere Marquette 1225, the last large "working" steam locomotive in the state of Michigan. Supported by dues and philanthropy advanced through its



*Pere Marquette 1225, located in Owosso, Michigan, is the last large "working" steam locomotive in the state.*

loyal membership totaling more than 750 nationwide, the SRI has provided educational, technical, and cultural enrichment experiences for those who are able to travel to Owosso, Michigan. A much larger audience, comprised mostly of K-12 students from communities throughout the state, has been identified through the collaborative efforts of SRI and the Shiawassee Regional Education Service District. The SRI in cooperation with the Tuscola & Saginaw Bay Railway Co. will create a *linear museum* by making use of the local 230-mile long rail line between Ann Arbor and Petoskey to enhance access for this audience. Over 135,000 K-12 students are within a 30-minute drive from this unique corridor.

The railroad, its people, technology and commerce, played a significant role in the development of the commercial and social fabric of all Michigan communities. Access to interactive railroading educational programming via the SRI's *linear museum* will provide opportunities for children of all ages to gain a better understanding of

their family history, the history of their community, and of the steam era railroading technology applications that drove economic and social development throughout Michigan.

The SRI is under contract with Warner Brothers to provide technical advice for a Steven Spielberg/Tom Hanks production of the children's Christmas story *The Polar Express*.

The Pere Marquette PM 1225 locomotive will star in the motion picture as the magical locomotive that takes skeptical children to the North Pole to meet Santa Claus. Once released in November of 2004 this production will further enhance the awareness of SRI programs.

To join, learn more and support this unique preservation effort contact Dennis Braid, Executive Director at: The Steam Railroading Institute, P.O. Box 665, Owosso MI 48867-0665 (989) 725-9464

E-mail: [mstrp@shianet.org](mailto:mstrp@shianet.org)  
Website: [www.mstrp.com](http://www.mstrp.com)

(Continued from page 1)

### GOV. NAMES GLORIA JEFF MDOT DIRECTOR

Deputy Administrator of the Federal Highway Administration by former President Bill Clinton. In 2000, Ms. Jeff left her position with FHWA to work as vice president for Parsons Brinkerhoff, one of the largest engineering consulting firms in the country. Prior to working for FHWA, Ms. Jeff served 13 years with MDOT in a variety of positions including Deputy Director of the Bureau of Transportation Planning.

Ms. Jeff has been honored by the National Technical Association as one of the Top Women in the Sciences and Technology in 1998, and was recipient of the 2000 Trailblazer Award from the Garrett A. Morgan Association.



*Gloria Jeff,  
New MDOT Director*

### EMERGENCY PHONE NUMBERS AVAILABLE

A newly updated map of Michigan's rail system with railroad company emergency telephone numbers is now available by contacting the Michigan Railroads Association. "All police and fire departments should know which railroads are traversing their communities and how to contact each company in case of an emergency," said Bob Chaprnka, president of the Michigan Railroads Association (MRA). "This publication provides the necessary information" Contact the MRA at (517) 482-9413 or by e-mail at [mra@michiganrailroadsassociation.com](mailto:mra@michiganrailroadsassociation.com) for a copy free of charge. This information can also be obtained by accessing MRA's web page at [www.michiganrailroadsassociation.com](http://www.michiganrailroadsassociation.com)

# MRA

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